The Beginning College Survey of Student Engagement (BCSSE), a companion survey to the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), was launched in 2007. Since then, more than 665,000 entering first-year students at 441 institutions across the US and Canada have participated.

BCSSE collects data about entering college students’ high school academic and co-curricular experiences, as well as their expectations for participating in educationally purposeful activities during the first college year.

BCSSE administration usually takes place prior to the start of fall classes and is designed to be paired with a NSSE administration in the spring to provide an in-depth understanding of first-year student engagement. Faculty, advisors, administrators, researchers, and others can use BCSSE data independently or in combination with NSSE data for program development, institutional assessment and improvement, and related purposes.

In fall 2015, 107 U.S. institutions participated in BCSSE. Of those, 71 (67%) also administered NSSE in spring 2016, allowing comparisons of incoming students’ experiences and expectations with their actual experiences at the end of the first year.

Survey Administration and Respondents

BCSSE is administered locally by campus officials who distribute the paper survey or facilitate the online administration. In 2015, 44 institutions (41%) utilized paper surveys, 62 institutions (57%) chose the online survey, and two institutions (2%) used a combination of the two. Nearly 69,000 entering first-year students completed BCSSE, representing all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Guam, Puerto Rico, U.S. Virgin Islands, Northern Mariana Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, as well as U.S. Armed Forces in America, Europe, and the Pacific. In addition, BCSSE was completed by students at one Canadian institution.

BCSSE Participating Institutions

Many different types of U.S. institutions participated in BCSSE. Among them, about one in three (34%) were classified as baccalaureate colleges, 50% as master’s colleges and universities, and 17% as doctorate-granting universities (see Table 1).

Table 1
Profile of BCSSE 2015 U.S. Institutions and Bachelor’s-Granting U.S. Institutions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution Characteristics</th>
<th>BCSSE 2015 (%)</th>
<th>U.S.a (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Carnegie Basic Classificationb</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doc/Higher: Doctoral Universities (Highest Research Activity)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doc/Higher: Doctoral Universities (Higher Research Activity)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doc/Moderate: Doctoral Universities (Moderate Research Activity)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master’s L: Master’s Colleges and Universities (larger programs)</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master’s M: Master’s Colleges and Universities (medium programs)</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master’s S: Master’s Colleges and Universities (smaller programs)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bac/A&amp;S: Baccalaureate Colleges—Arts &amp; Sciences Focus</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bac/Diverse: Baccalaureate Colleges—Diverse Fields</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undergraduate Enrollment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fewer than 1,000</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1,000–2,499</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2,500–4,999</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5,000–9,999</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10,000–19,999</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20,000 or more</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: Percentages are unweighted and based on U.S. postsecondary institutions that award baccalaureate degrees and belong to one of the eight Carnegie classifications in the table. Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

a. U.S. percentages are based on the 2014 IPEDS Institutional Characteristics data.

b. For information on the Carnegie Foundation’s 2015 Basic Classification, see carnegieclassifications.iu.edu.
BCSSE institutions generally reflect the diversity of bachelor’s-granting institutions with respect to Carnegie Classification, public or private control, and undergraduate enrollment (Table 1). Public institutions were somewhat more represented than private institutions.

**BCSSE U.S. Respondents**

BCSSE is locally administered, so sampling schemes and data collection methods vary across the participating institutions, but most institutions sample their entire incoming first-year population and typically collect data from 50% to nearly 100% of their students. Thus, BCSSE 2015 respondents, profiled in Table 2, likely provide institutions accurate estimates of those incoming first-year classes.

Most BCSSE respondents graduated from a public high school, with more than half reporting they typically earned grades of A or A− (see Table 3). Also, while most students attend an institution that is relatively close to home, about 20% must travel four or more hours to campus.

### Table 2
Profile of BCSSE 2015 U.S. Respondents: Demographic Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender Identity</th>
<th>Percentage of Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Man</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woman</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Another gender identity</td>
<td>&lt;1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prefer not to respond</td>
<td>&lt;1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>Percentage of Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>American Indian or Alaska native</td>
<td>&lt;1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black or African American</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic or Latino</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander</td>
<td>&lt;1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiracial</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I prefer not to respond</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| International Student              | 4                         |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>High School Graduation Year</th>
<th>Percentage of Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2012 or earlier</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| First-Generation Student*          | 49                        |
| Financial Aid Recipientb           | 93                        |

---

**Table 3**
Profile of BCSSE 2015 U.S. Respondents: School Experience Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>High School Type</th>
<th>Percentage of Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private, religiously affiliated</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private, not religiously affiliated</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home school</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>High School Grades (Typical)</th>
<th>Percentage of Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A−</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B−</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+ or lower</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Driving Time from Home to Institution</th>
<th>Percentage of Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than 1 hour</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At least 1, less than 2 hours</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At least 2, less than 4 hours</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At least 4, less than 6 hours</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At least 6, less than 8 hours</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 hours or more</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: Includes both U.S. and Canadian institutions, and 20 institutions with nonstandard population files or administrations. Percentages do not sum to 100 due to rounding.